Nutrition and Dietetics

Low Lactose Diet

What is Lactose?

Lactose is the natural sugar (carbohydrate) found in milk from cows, goats and sheep. All milk products, and manufactured foods, containing milk or lactose milk derivatives, therefore contain lactose.

What is Lactose Intolerance?

Lactose intolerance occurs when you are unable to digest lactose. The enzyme lactase breaks down lactose so that the body can use the sugar for energy. If there is not enough lactase, you become lactose intolerant. Symptoms can include abdominal bloating, wind, abdominal pain and diarrhoea after eating or drinking a food / drink containing lactose.

What are the Causes?

There are varying degrees of lactose intolerance, because the enzyme lactase may be deficient to varying degrees. Lactose intolerance can be caused by a loss of lactase activity, (due to either surgery; or coeliac disease; or an infection in the digestive system -gastrointestinal illness), and may only be temporary. Alternatively some people have a reduced lactase production, more common in certain ethnic groups. The enzyme lactase may be absent altogether, as in congenital lactose intolerance, but this is rare.

What is the Treatment?

Lactose intolerance is treated with either a low lactose diet (where the amount of dietary lactose is reduced), or a lactose-free diet (where lactose is completely avoided). The type of diet advised depends on the type of lactose intolerance. Many people are able to tolerate foods with lower lactose content and can follow a low lactose diet.

This diet sheet provides information on a low lactose diet.

If you still have symptoms after following a low lactose diet, you may be advised by your dietitian to follow a lactose-free diet for a few weeks before re-introducing lactose gradually back into your diet. Appropriate information will be given and discussed.

If you require a lactose-free diet, please see your dietitian. Infants requiring a lactose-free diet will need a lactose-free infant formula.

Low-lactose diet:

It is only necessary to avoid the foods which contain higher amounts of lactose.

These are:

- milk (cow's, goat's or sheep's milk), and
- some products made from these milks or in which milk is the main ingredient.

All other food groups can be eaten: Fruits & Vegetables; Meats, Fish, Egg, and Pulses; Carbohydrates (eg. Bread, Rice, Pasta, Potatoes etc); see Eatwell Guide.

Many cheeses and some yoghurts made from milk have low lactose content and may be tolerated. It may be worth trying different brands. The following are milk and dairy foods to choose.

Milk and Dairy Foods to Choose:

Milk

For **Adults** a small amount of cow, goat or sheep's milk may be tolerated: 50ml (3-4 tablespoons) maximum of whole, semi-skimmed, or skimmed milk as a drink, in tea/coffee, or ingredient in sauce or bread.

For your main source of milk, use a Milk Substitute such as:

- Low lactose milks e.g. Lactolite; Lacto-free

For the following try to choose one which is calcium-enriched:

- Soya milk (a variety are available)
- Rice milk e.g. Rice Dream, Provamel Rice
- Oat milk e.g. Oatly Healthy Oat Enriched
- Coconut milk
- Nut milks (almond / hazelnut)
- Pea milks and Potato milks
- Hemp milk e.g. Good Hemp

Cheese

The following have a low lactose content:

- Cheddar, edam, feta, mozzarella, camembert, goat's, gouda, blue cheeses, brie, pecorino
- Soya cheese / non-dairy cheeses e.g. Cheezly, Tofutti cheese alternatives, Bute Island Food Cheese
- Non-dairy cheese-style soft spreads e.g. Free From Supermarkets' own brands, Tofutti.

Small amounts of the following may be tolerated:

- 2 tablespoons maximum cottage cheese, cream cheese, low fat soft cheese, ricotta, quark
- 2 slices maximum halloumi

Yoghurt

- Yoghurts and fermented milk products: 2 tablespoons maximum as part of a meal or snack, may be tolerated
- Soya or coconut yoghurt
- Lactose free yoghurt (Lactofree)

Fat / Spread

- Butter
- Dairy-free spreads
- Soya spreads

Cream

- Cream, sour cream, crème fraiche
- Soya cream
- Oat cream

Ice cream

- 1 Scoop maximum of normal milk/dairy ice cream
- Lactose-free ice-cream (Lactofree)
- Non-dairy ice-cream (Swedish Glace, Almond Dream, Alpro)

Custard

- 2 tablespoons maximum custard
- Soya custard / custard desserts (Alpro, or supermarkets own brand)
- If making from custard powder use lactose-free milk.

Chocolate

- 30g maximum milk or white chocolate
- Dark chocolate
- Dairy free milk chocolate eg.Plamil, Moofree, Supermarkets' own brand

Note:

Infants and Children: not all milk substitutes are suitable, so please speak with your Paediatric Dietitian for advice on both infant formulae and milk substitute.

Infants less than 6 months: recommendations are that no soya product should be given to a child less than 6 months old.

Other Manufactured Foods

There are many non-milk or non-dairy manufactured food products which may have lactose, milk or milk-derivatives in the ingredients list / label, but only in very small amounts. These products do not need to be avoided because of the small quantities. For infants and children please speak with your Dietitian.

Medications

Some medications / toothpaste / supplements may also contain lactose, so check the patient information leaflet in your medication. If it contains lactose, do not stop taking your medication.

If and when required, your doctor or pharmacist will be able to advise lactose-free medications.

Milk and Dairy Foods to Avoid:

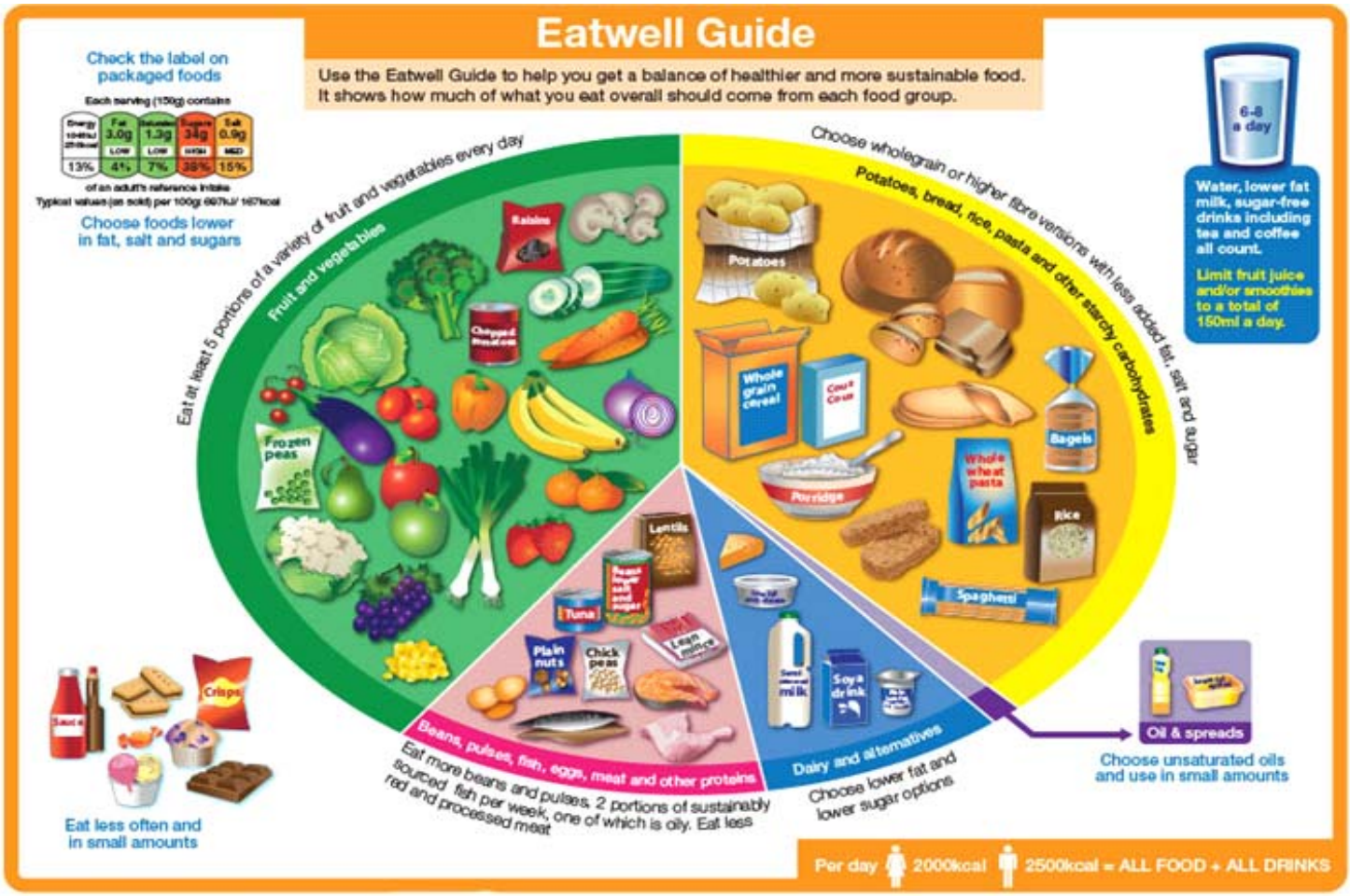
Avoid cow's, goat's, or sheep's milk, and all products made from these milks where it is the main ingredient. Exceptions are the small quantities as advised in the "Milk and Dairy Foods to Choose" list on pages 2 and 3.

- Full fat, semi-skimmed, or skimmed milks; evaporated, condensed milks; dried milk powder; sterilised milk; long-life UHT milk
- Milkshakes and drinks made from milk
- Milk or cream-based sauces e.g. white sauce, cheese sauce, creamy pasta sauce, cauliflower cheese, cook-in sauces (milk-based)
- Cream and desserts made from milk or cream e.g. rice pudding, canned or instant rice pudding, trifle, ice-cream, custard, fresh chilled custard, instant custard mix etc
- All other milk or dairy products, (e.g. cheeses, cheese spreads, yoghurts, fat spreads, chocolate), not on the "Foods to Choose" list above are to be avoided

Dietary Calcium

Avoid unnecessarily restricting dairy products which are good sources of calcium and protein.

Eatwell Guide



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland Crown copyright 2016.

If you are following a low lactose diet, you need to ensure an adequate calcium intake.

The recommended daily calcium requirements are:

Age	Calcium (mg / day)
Adult (18+ years)	700
Adult (diagnosed with Inflammatory Bowel Disease)	1000
Adult (diagnosed with Coeliac Disease)	1000 - 1500
Infant / Child:	
0-12 months	525
1-3 years	350
4-6 years	450
7-10 years	550
11-18 years (boys)	1000
11-18 years (girls)	800

Try to choose products fortified with calcium. Check food labels as alternatives to cow's milk / milk products may not always be fortified with calcium. Your dietitian will advise you if a calcium supplement is necessary.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D, which we mainly obtain from sunlight on our skin, helps the absorption of calcium from food. Some foods that contain vitamin D include liver, oily fish (salmon, mackerel and sardines), eggs, margarine and fortified breakfast cereals. The 2016 Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition recommend that everyone, including children over 5 years old, should take a vitamin D supplement (10 microgram per day) available over the counter.

If you have any queries please contact:

Dietitian _____

Contact Number _____

The information contained within this leaflet is intended for your specific needs and should not be passed on to anyone else.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

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If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

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